



ATF News

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ATF CELEBRATES 35 YEARS AS AN INDEPENDENT FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT BUREAU *History Includes More Than 200 Years of Service To The Country*

WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), which traces its roots to the 1789 congressional imposition of a tax on imported liquor, celebrates 35 years Sunday as an independent federal law enforcement bureau.

It was July 1, 1972, that the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Internal Revenue Service became the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms within the Department of the Treasury. When it moved to the Department of Justice in 2003, it added “Explosives” to its name.

ATF’s history includes the breakup of the “Whisky Ring” of the 1870s, the exploits of the “Untouchables” during Prohibition, and the investigation of the Washington-area sniper case in 2002. Today, ATF agents are investigating firearms traffickers and arresting organized gang members and preventing terrorism.

“The world has changed dramatically in the intervening years since 1972 and ATF has adapted and evolved,” Acting Director Michael J. Sullivan said in a message to employees. “New threats bring new responsibilities; new technology brings new tools. ATF remains strong and resilient in meeting these challenges and in finding innovative ways to share our resources and expertise with our law enforcement partners.

“On this anniversary, ATF experts are arresting career criminals and dismantling violent gangs, investigating the origin and cause of catastrophic fires, and sharing explosives expertise by training our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

While it no longer regulates and collects revenue from the alcohol and tobacco industries, ATF continues to regulate the firearms and explosives industries; apprehend armed violent criminals, bombers and arsonists; enforce the federal laws on firearms, explosives and arson; and investigate the criminal trafficking and diversion of alcohol and tobacco.

More information about ATF and its programs is available at www.atf.gov.

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